

REMARKS

The instant Amendment is filed in response to the non-final Office Action of August 11, 2008.

Revisions have been introduced into the specification to emphasize that applicant's coupling is formed of two portions 8, 10 of different heights, or thicknesses. A step 8a marks the intersection between the two portions, as shown in FIG. 4. The reference numeral 8a has been introduced into the drawings, for consistency.

Claims 2-8, 10 and 11 have been cancelled, and new claims 12-17 are presented for consideration on their merits. Claim 12 is independent in format, and claims 13-17 are dependent thereon.

Claim 12 notes that applicant's unique coupling, applied to, or integrally formed with, inverted T-beams, comprises two coplanar portions (8, 10) of different heights (or thicknesses) that form an appendix (2). The outer portion (10) is bent, at its free end, into a substantially V-shape with two legs. A tooth (16) is deformed, or otherwise struck from the plane of one leg of the V, and projects upwardly at an acute angle. The free end of the upstanding tooth faces the end of the first inner portion (8), and extends beyond the intersection (8a) between the two portions (8, 10). The tooth fits into rectangular apertures (18) in the central web of a second inverted T-beam, when two beams are joined together (without special tools); the tooth is locked behind a projection (20) in the rectangular aperture (18).

Additional details of applicant's coupling are expressed in dependent claims 13-17.

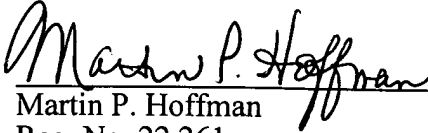
An enlarge view of applicant's coupling, and the relative size and orientation of tooth 16, is shown in appended Exhibit A. Applicant's coupling can be released from its locked position in aperture 18 by squeezing, or pinching, tooth 16 toward the second portion of the coupling, thereby terminating contact with projection (20) in rectangular aperture (18).

In contrast thereto, Koski (U.S. Patent 5,687,525) discloses connector 19, including a lock tab 4, lanced from the plane of the connector. Flap section 47 is bent inwardly to return towards the plane of the connector. As pointed out in column 7, lines 47-50, flap section 47 enables lock tab 41 to cam laterally inwardly to allow it to escape from the slot. In essence, as one runner is disengaged from another runner, the flap 47 engages the edge of opening 18 and forces the lock tab 41 towards the plane of the connector 19, so that, with a twisting motion, as shown in FIG. 9, the two components can be disconnected. In order to perform properly, flap section 47 must be formed at the end of the lock tab 41, and must be bent inwardly towards the plane of connector 41.

The configuration of the pertinent components in Koski, and the manner of operating same, is shown in Exhibit B, attached to the Amendment. It should be readily apparent that

applicant's invention, as expressed in claims 12-17, is neither disclosed, nor suggested, by Koski. The secondary references to Duffy and Brown, taken singly or in combination with Koski, do not render obvious applicant's unique coupling device, as presently claimed. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of the instant Amendment is clearly warranted.

Respectfully submitted,


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Enclosures: Exhibits A and B

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